

## Slavophiles and Populists

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*Two Russias have been confronting each other in hostile fashion since the beginning of the eighteenth century. On one side was governmental, imperial, gentry Russia, wealthy and armed not only with bayonets, but with every kind of bureaucratic and police trick. . . . On the other, the Rus' of the black people—poor, agricultural, communal, democratic, unarmed, taken unaware, conquered—in fact—without a battle.*

—Alexander Herzen, *Baptized Property*

*What is called Tolstoy's "anarchism" essentially and fundamentally expresses our Slav anti-Statism, which, again, is really a national characteristic, ingrained in our flesh from old times, our desire to scatter nomadically. Up to now, we have indulged that desire passionately, as you and everyone else know. We Russians know it too, but we always break away along the lines of least resistance; we see that this is pernicious, but still we crawl further and further away; and these mournful cockroach journeyings are called "the History of Russia," the history of a State which has been established almost incidentally, mechanically—to the surprise of the majority of its honest-minded citizens—by the forces of the Variags, Tartars, Baltic Germans and petty officials.*

—Maxim Gorky, *Reminiscences of Tolstoy,  
Chekhov and Andreev*



Populism is the grand term that is generally used to describe the ideology of Russian radicalism that emerged in the late 1850s. But it cannot be used without some definition. In the first place, no one in the 1860s or 1870s actually used the term "Populism" in this inclusive way, a fact that should make the conscientious historian pause. Radicalism then was often referred to by the vague and elusive term "nihilism," a designation that itself needs clarification. And finally, because it was largely the affair of isolated student and intelligentsia circles, the radicalism of the 1860s took on a conspiratorial, underground, and elitist cast that has quite properly led historians to call it "Jacobinism" or "Blanquism."\*

Some years ago, the American historian Richard Pipes presented a telling critique of the use of the term "Populism" (*narodnichestvo*) to designate an entire stage of the Russian revolutionary movement.<sup>1</sup> He showed that the term originated in the mid-1870s and described (often with pejorative intent) only one current of the Russian radicalism of the day. Originally the Populists, or *narodniki*, were simply Russian radicals who believed that the intelligentsia had no business imposing its ideals on the Russian people—or its timetable for revolutionary action, either. The original Populists believed that the intelligentsia should learn from the people, go to school with the people, immerse themselves in the people, and that the intelligentsia's role in the future transformation of Russia should be modest and limited.

Over the next twenty years, the scope of the term became ever more inclusive. Finally, in the debates of the 1890s over the future of Russian revolutionary development, the then Marxist Pëtr Struve designated as Populists *all* those radicals who denied the progressive character of capitalism, who idealized the natural economy and the spirit and institutions of the Russian peasantry. Significantly, Struve insisted on the relationship of Populism to Slavophilism and regarded Herzen and Chernyshevsky as its founding fathers.<sup>2</sup>

\*Blanquism takes its name from the French socialist Louis Auguste Blanqui, and denotes the view that a small but determined minority can seize power and "make" the revolution.



Struve's characterization of a broad Populist position was developed in the course of a heated polemical struggle by Russian Marxism against that very position. But we should be wary of rejecting it for that reason. His general view was then taken up by the influential historian of nineteenth-century Russian radicalism V. Ia. Iakovlev (Bogucharsky), who wrote in the immediate prerevolutionary period, and it has formed the basis for virtually all discussions of the problem by Soviet historians.<sup>3</sup> Outside of the Soviet Union, Franco Venturi has also adopted Struve's general viewpoint in his monumental *Roots of Revolution*.

If we grant that the Struve-Venturi definition of Populism is an artificial construct, created by a polemicist and taken over by historians, how can one justify continuing such usage? I think that the primary reason for doing so is that Struve and those who followed him, however polemical their intentions, did discern that the intellectual framework within which Russian radicals operated from the 1860s into the 1880s (and in some cases beyond) had a gestalt of guiding ideas and one must recognize that framework in order to understand the intellectual unity of the period. *Narodnichestvo*, or Populism, is the most convenient designation for the aggregate of those ideas. No other term will serve as well. If one abandons the effort to provide a term that characterizes those ideas and their interrelations, some intellectual relatedness and connection will be endangered. We would then have to fall back on the confusing vocabulary employed by the historical actors themselves, and all but the most experienced reader would find himself or herself lost in a verdant jungle of socialists, Socialist Revolutionaries, Populists, rebels, countrypeople, Jacobins, and nihilists. The fact is that almost all the radicals and revolutionaries of the period, as well as more moderate and amorphous public opinion, were deeply affected by a series of linked ideas, which in turn helped create a much vaguer tissue of belief, prejudice, habit, and slogan that had a profound effect on Russian politics and culture, far beyond the 1860s and 1870s. These ideas were given their initial "radical" formulation by Alexander Herzen, but he was much indebted to the Slavophiles, so we must begin our analysis there.



Most of these cultivated, culturally Westernized landowners, whose ideas dominated the Moscow salon discussion in the 1840s, were from ancient families that had suffered eclipse following the reforms of Peter the Great and the rise to prominence of new grandees under Catherine the Great. The views with which they so shocked their Westerner rivals were complex and have been commonly misinterpreted.<sup>4</sup> Their nationalism, their developed hostility to rationalism, and their deep belief in Orthodoxy and its historical mission have often led historians (particularly Soviet historians) to place them on the far right of the political spectrum.\* Others have seized upon their muted opposition to the reign of Nicholas I, their championship of the prerogatives of society as opposed to the state, and their general opposition to serfdom, and called them "liberals," using the concept with that ambiguity which seems unique to students of Russia.

I believe that the label that best describes the Slavophiles is the slightly cumbersome term "utopian reactionaries." They were hostile to the bureaucratized monarchy of their day, but not in the name of socialism, liberalism, or progress. Instead, they opposed to the barbarous present an idealized tableau of a patrimonial, premodern monarchy and repeatedly attacked Peter the Great, whose reforms had sealed the doom of the old aristocracy and created the modern "gentry." The aristocratic inheritance of nineteenth-century Russia was rather weak, but the Slavophiles clearly derived something of their inspiration from it. Hence their opposition to the extreme claims of the autocracy—as well as their horror of Western industrialism, liberalism, and democratic forms.

One reason there has been confusion about where the Slavophiles ought to be placed in the context of nineteenth-century politics is that historians have a reflexive tendency to use a Right-Left political axis as the organizing principle. With such a simple device, one probably does have to locate the Slavophiles on the Right, while the Populists—or at least their more mili-

\*But not always. See the recent and interesting, if highly uneven, articles contained in the symposium "Literaturnaia kritika rannikh slavianofilov," *Voprosy literatury*, nos. 5, 7, 10, and 12 (1969).



tant representatives—take their place on the extreme Left. Now this linear gradation from “reactionary” to “radical,” with intermediate shadings of “conservative,” “liberal,” and so on, may be roughly satisfactory when one is talking about politics in a modern society, where certain general conceptions about political life are broadly understood and politicking occurs at least partly in the open. But for nineteenth-century Russia it merely obscures the relationships between the various operative intellectual systems. The Slavophiles and those who were strongly marked by Slavophilism had varying political opinions; the political significance of Slavophilism is ambiguous. Despite its intellectual origins in Romantic and counterrevolutionary values, Slavophilism counterposed the Russian people and the Russian state in a provocative fashion that had the profoundest consequences for Russian culture in general and social thought in particular. Since the 1840s, Slavophile ideas have affected all segments of the Russian political spectrum from the extreme Right to the extreme Left. Even a cursory analysis<sup>5</sup> of the political and social ideas of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn reveals that Slavophile formulations have not lost their attractive power even today—especially today, one might say, for there has been a notable revival of interest in Slavophile ideas among Soviet intellectuals in the last decade. Some of them regard Lenin and Stalin as having robbed Russians of their religious and national inheritance—the same charge that the Slavophiles had leveled against Peter the Great.

The key idea that Populism took from Slavophilism was that the Russian peasant would be the savior of modern Russian society, and perhaps of the Western world as well. In one or another of its guises, this was one of the most widespread and influential ideas entertained by educated Russians in the mid- and late nineteenth century. It repeatedly crops up in the writings of Dostoevsky, and it is equally striking in the later work of Tolstoy (from *Anna Karenina* on), though the two never could agree on the nature of the peasant—or, for that matter, on how his redemptive mission would be carried out. Generations of Russian publicists and politicians simply could not escape the idea or the emo-



tional waves it created. It became embedded in Russian culture; it affected all the political parties that emerged in the brief constitutional period between 1905 and 1917. And, of course, it was the central idea of Populism.

Russian peasants had been living in village communities, with various forms of collective land ownership and governance, since the beginnings of recorded history, although the periodic repartition of communal land almost certainly derived from Peter the Great's fiscal policies in the early eighteenth century. But it was the Slavophiles who in the salon debates of the 1840s first saw the future of the nation in the spiritual and social life of the peasant and in his determined resistance to modernity. As P. V. Annenkov, one of the original opponents of the Slavophiles, wrote in his memoirs:

Everybody is familiar with the fact that a specifically *Russian* socialism, or what could be called popular or folk economic concepts . . . consisted of the doctrine involving the principles of the village commune [*obshchina*] and the guild [*artel*], i.e., the doctrine of the possession and utilization in common of the means of production. In the modest and limited form which our entire history gave it, *Russian* socialism was, in fact, first advanced by the Slavophiles with the amendment, however, that it served not only as a model of economic organization for anything pertaining to agriculture and the trades but also as an example of combining the idea of Christianity with the needs of external, material existence.<sup>6</sup>

As Annenkov points out, the Slavophile conception of the peasantry was a religious one, tailored to the aristocratic nostalgia of those expatriates from the developing world of the nineteenth century. The Slavophiles felt that the integral Christian civilization of pre-Petrine Russia had been partially preserved—and in a largely unself-conscious way—in the Russian peasant.\* He was

\*Dostoevsky has been called a Populist (*narodnik*), and at times his rhetoric could be confused with that of his radical contemporaries. "In virtually every respect we are poorer than the *narod*," he wrote on one occasion; and again, "it is we who ought to bow down before the *narod* and look to it for everything, both thoughts and forms; bow down before the truth of the *narod* and recognize it as the truth." (Quotations from Aleksandr Ivanov, "Zagadka slavianofil'skoi kritiki," *Voprosy literatury*, No. 5 [1969], p. 98.) But the reader soon realizes that the "truth" to which Dostoevsky is referring is ancient and religious—a Slavophile version of peasant truth, not a Populist one.



regarded as a communal being to whom Roman law and private property were alien, whose spiritual faculties had not been fatally damaged by Western rationalism. He still lived in a religious universe that included his social world; he was not yet touched by alienation. As one of the younger Slavophiles put it, in Russia "the people has preserved in itself the gift of self-sacrifice, the freedom of moral inspiration and the respect for tradition. In Russia, the sole shelter of toryism is the black hut of the peasant. In our administration, in our university lecture halls, blows the desiccating wind of whiggery."<sup>7</sup>

The Populists agreed with the Slavophiles in regarding the reintegration of the human personality and the end of alienation as dependent upon the development of peasant communalism, particularly the mir, into the dominant institutions of the Russia of the future. But there were great differences. The most obvious one pertains to the distinction between those who idealized the prerational institutions of the past and those who (to some degree, at any rate) accepted rationalism, individualism, and industrialism, and sought to create a new kind of communalism that would humanize rather than reject the achievements of the French and Industrial revolutions.

Here we must take note of the heritage of the Westerners, who contributed as much to Populism as did the Slavophiles. While for the Slavophiles the reforms of Peter the Great shattered Russia's "natural," organic culture, for the Westerners they meant the beginning of Russia's *rapprochement* with Western Europe, the vital center of Western civilization. For the more radical Westerners, hope for the future lay not in any kind of popular democratism, of a kind that the Populists later discovered, but in the ideas of European liberalism and socialism. These, along with Western philosophy, science, and industrialism, had been brought to Russia first by the state, under Peter and Catherine, and then by rebels like Radishchev and the Decembrists.

Populists vacillated between the Slavophile and the Western inheritances: they were ambivalent about Peter the Great, sensitive to the extreme cosmopolitanism of European socialism, and



so on. But despite the powerful influence of more Western Populists like Chernyshevsky, the “reactionary” inheritance of Slavophilism was nearer the surface in Populism than was generally the case with pre-Marxist socialist currents in Western Europe. Sometimes, in Populist writing, industrialism itself seemed the enemy; the various Russian words for “bourgeois” bore a pejorative weight among radicals that seems greater than was usual among Western socialists. This vague but passionate hatred of the bourgeoisie and its works greatly influenced the development of Russian politics before 1917, weakening the “liberal” center at the expense of both the Left and the agrarian Right.

Speaking of the nostalgic and—it might be claimed—reactionary elements in Populist thinking, which he relates to Russia’s political and economic backwardness, Alexander Gerschenkron has written that

... the populists, in dealing with the problem [of Russia’s destiny], “clearly saw the advantages of Russia’s being a late-comer upon the modern historical scene” and “the possibility of adopting the results of foreign experience without incurring the heavy cost of experimentation.” But they did so only in order to abandon the argument by an almost imperceptible twist and to raise the paradoxical claim that the preservation of the *old*—of the field commune (*obshchina*) and the workers’ cooperative (*artel*)—rather than the easy adoption of the *new* constituted the advantages of backwardness.

But Gerschenkron then cites the admirable response of Venturi to the general view that Populist communalism represented a “tragic surrender of realism to utopia”:

An idea that appears to look backward in time, remolds itself on the past, seems to prefer what has been, and to eschew what will be—does really such an idea, whose function is destined to be negative, constitute a utopian retarding factor in economic and social development? Or does it not rather, at least at times, represent an act of *reculer pour mieux sauter*, that is to say, a fruitful attempt to preserve the most precious aspects of the past in order to transmit them to the future? History is not made just by looking forward but, I should say,



by looking both forward and backward. Socialism is the idea of community and equality regarding material goods and of an economy based on solidarity. Is not socialism [so conceived] a legacy of the past that has been preserved by being transformed into an ideal for the future?<sup>8</sup>

Clearly the argument between these two distinguished historians transcends the question of the specifically reactionary aspect of Populism. It raises, in fact, the deepest questions of historical development: Is it inevitable or desirable or possible to make the steady achievement of political and economic rationality one's primary criterion for judging a modern nation? Or should we not admit that history is a maze of crooked roads and pathways, leading to destinations that constantly elude our predictive efforts? Should words like "romantic" and "nostalgic," with their implications of the speaker's certitude about historical development, be used by social "scientists" in the fashion that has become habitual to them?

The *image* of the peasant in Slavophilism and Populism is an important index of the difference between the two ideologies. For the Slavophiles, the peasant was religious not merely in the sense of being pious, but in that he still inhabited a religious and nonrational universe; the communal and the religious were inseparable. The Orthodox Church was the spiritual and transcendent manifestation of the communalism that permeated the peasant's daily round and was institutionally embodied in the village commune. But the operation of the community was not "democratic," in the sense of head-counting, majority rule, factionalism, and all of the other detestable innovations of Enlightenment thinking. The organism decided matters according to Christianity and tradition, and not by any kind of politicking. (The Slavophiles distinguished sharply between tradition and Roman law, under which category they tended to subsume a great deal of positive law, and which they regarded as an evil—in the abstract, at any rate. When it actually came to their property rights, they sometimes changed their tune.) And as aristo-



cratic spokesmen often have, the Slavophiles tended to view the peasant as endowed with a kind of childlike sweetness, but capable, at the same time, of being corrupted as a child might be corrupted, and also—more ominously—of being prone to childlike rages and tantrums. In the benevolent social setting of the future, this peculiar moral sweetness and abhorrence of violence would give the new civilization much of its religious and moral tone.

The Populist view of the essence of the peasant was quite different. Communalism retained the central place in the tableau, but it now pointed forward to socialism. The absence of a Western sense of law and in particular a Western sense of private property was conceded to be a survival, a kind of primitivism, but a fortunate one that would enable those whom history had seemingly left behind to leap over the debris of Europe's failures into the socialist future. Here certainly was one of the "advantages of backwardness."

Many Populists were violently opposed to the Slavophile notion that the Russian peasantry was profoundly religious. Their view was well expressed by that radical Westerner of the previous generation, Vissarion Belinsky. "What a lie!" Belinsky wrote in his famous *Letter to Gogol* of 1847.

The foundation of religiosity is pietism, reverence, the fear of God. But the Russian pronounces God's name while scratching his backside. He says of the icon: "it's good for praying—and you can cover the pots with it, too."

Take a harder look and you will see that this is a profoundly atheistic people. There is a lot of superstition but not a trace of religiosity . . . mystical exaltation is not in the nature [of the Russian people]; it has too much good sense, its mind is too lucid and positive for that, and it may be in this very fact that the immensity of its historical destiny resides.<sup>9</sup>

Others, like S. M. Kravchinsky, a prominent Populist spokesman in the 1870s, were willing to admit that the Russian people were "religious," if by that one means merely a way of life that is



dominated by ethical norms and full of ritual observance.<sup>10</sup> But it was the schismatics and the sectarians\* who really stirred the interest of many Populists.<sup>11</sup> The sectarians in particular, with their denial of Orthodox ritual, their rationalism, and their belief in the earthly achievement of the New Jerusalem, seemed very near to the secular radicalism of the intelligentsia. Surely it would not be hard to lift the almost transparent veil of mysticism and irrationalism and reveal to them that their ideas were, in essence, identical with those of the intelligentsia, that their radical millenarianism was only a religiously expressed socialism. But this project, which attracted a good many socialists in the 1870s, was never realized. The Old Believers and the sectarians, whatever their religious differences with the Orthodox peasantry, and despite the persecution that the government had visited on them, belonged to the world of the Russian village and countryside. They remained finally as difficult to reach as their Orthodox brethren.

Thus there were two major Populist views of peasant religiosity: either it was a myth, zealously fostered by government and clerical interests for their own purposes, or it was a particular archaic vocabulary for expressing indigenous social and economic values. If the latter were true, the task of the intelligentsia was to help the peasant understand what he really believed, to eliminate the religious mode of expression, to raise him to self-consciousness.

And finally, while the Slavophiles regarded the peasant as childlike, submissive, and hostile to violence (the wishful thinking in this depiction is evident), the Populists wanted to see the peasant as rebellious, independent—able and willing, in the last analysis, to conquer what was rightfully his. While the Slavophiles painted an idyllic picture of traditional communal life, rich in religious ritual and inspiration, pacific and unchanging, the Populists turned to the traditions of peasant rebellion and

\*The schismatics, generally known as Old Believers, separated from the Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century, having refused to accept a variety of reforms in Church ritual. The sectarians were Russian offshoots of European Protestantism, although their doctrine and practice took on a thoroughly Russian luxuriance and eccentricity.



viewed the uprisings of Stenka Razin and Pugachëv as foreshadowings of the peasant revolution that was soon to occur. Populists whose fantasies and imaginings tended to the bloodthirsty, such as Mikhail Bakunin, were enthralled by the Pugachëv rebellion:

The brigand, in Russia, is the true and only revolutionary—the revolutionary without phrasemaking and without bookish rhetoric. Popular revolution is born from the merging of the revolt of the brigand with that of the peasant. . . . Such were the revolts of Stenka Razin and Pugachëv . . . and even today this is still the world of the Russian revolution.<sup>12</sup>

But most of the Populists, most of the time, did not envisage the revolution in quite so elementally destructive a fashion; the notion of a new *Pugachëvshchina* was not something that many serious and educated Russians, even radical ones, could contemplate without misgivings. But fascination with the folklore of peasant revolt was an important aspect of the new image of the Russian peasant that the Populists were creating. Both P. I. Iakushkin and I. A. Khudiakov, two of the radical folklorists of the 1860s, were deeply interested in what the *narod* had made of these revolts in its folklore. And there is no question that the Populists were psychologically impelled to endow the peasants with the very activist qualities that the Slavophiles denied and, perhaps, feared. As the Populists saw the matter, the peasant had to provide the elemental force that would sweep away the old order. If the peasant could not or would not do this, the first line of radical defense was to take refuge in Blanquist and Jacobin ideas, or in other forms of intelligentsia elitism. Beyond these remedies lay helplessness, apathy, and despair—and the kind of “conversion” to Slavophile nationalism and conservatism that afflicted the movement in times when reaction seemed triumphant.<sup>13</sup>

The Slavophiles were opposed to and at times terrified of peasant revolution. Their notion of the coming of a new civilization to Russia was vaguer and much less plausible than the Populists'; it depended on the conversion of a dominant part of the Russian elite to their own values—a most unlikely proposition. And one



feels that beneath their hopeful talk they suspected it would never happen.

The strongly elitist cast to both Slavophilism and Populism emerged with particular clarity when disappointments had been suffered. The Slavophiles, indeed, scarcely tried to *reach* the people at all. So we return to the dilemma of the intelligentsia's relationship to the Russian masses. When Lenin pessimistically and somewhat contemptuously said that the working class by itself could achieve only "trade union consciousness," he was responding to much the same dilemma. The relationship between socialist intellectuals and their working-class constituency, a central problem in the history of socialism, was posed in Russia with special sharpness and even brutality. With the help of World War I and the self-destructiveness of the Russian government, Lenin found a "solution" for the problem, but it was a perilous resolution indeed for the humane and liberating core of socialism.

Another, rather vaguer idea that was commonly held by Slavophiles and Populists has generally been called the "idea of the separate path" for Russian development. Partially the product of feelings of inferiority among Russian intellectuals, this notion could easily become the vehicle for compensatory feelings of superiority. The idea that one nation should have a path of development distinct from that of others does not strike the late-twentieth-century reader as nearly so strange as it did the opponents of the Slavophiles and the Populists. But the Westerners of the 1840s, influenced to one degree or another by Hegelianism, found the idealized communalism of the Slavophiles hard to reconcile with historical progress. And the early Russian Marxists were committed to a rigid and unitary developmental scheme (which may have owed more to Engels than to Marx) that they believed all nations would experience. To Georgy Plekhanov, the first Russian theoretician of Marxism, it was absurd to think that a nation might in any way "skip" the capitalist stage of development and move directly from agrarian backwardness to socialism—and Plekhanov's early Marxist articles attacked the Populists on just this point. The bourgeoisie, he argued, had first to be able



to perform its essential tasks: the achievement of a certain amount of political freedom and, above all, the creation of industrialism and material wealth. If a group of political conspirators tried to seize power and "make" the revolution before capitalism had matured and begun to decay, the result was sure to be a new kind of despotism—what Plekhanov liked to refer to as "Peruvian communism." And in certain respects the history of the Soviet Union has borne out Plekhanov's strictures.

Our own attitude toward historical regularity, toward models of historical development, is—or should be—far more cautious and chastened. Certainly we should recall Venturi's words, that history is made "by looking both forward and backward"—to which the pessimist might add that it is only with the greatest luck that we ever "make" history at all. In any case, the violation of some preordained scheme of development seems much less heretical to us than it seemed to the Hegelian and Marxist critics of the nineteenth century.

The great hope of the first generation of Russian Slavophiles was that Russia had a unique destiny among the nations of the world: to save herself and others from the disastrous path of modernity that had begun when the Roman Catholic Church cut itself off from the Orthodoxy in the late Middle Ages. Papal autocracy and Roman rationalism, according to the Slavophiles, had bred the extremes of Protestant subjectivism and the political rationalism that had created both modern rationalizing despotism and secular political democracy—as embodied, most catastrophically, in the French Revolution and Napoleon.<sup>14</sup> In the course of the nineteenth century, Western philosophy and social forms had increasingly revealed their bankruptcy. By the 1840s, the Slavophiles hoped, the time was rapidly approaching when Russia would reverse her disastrous emulation of this brutal and diseased Western civilization and recover her old Christian communalism, to the ultimate benefit of "the West" as well.

None of the Slavophiles could say with any precision how this transformation was to be effected. None of them, it is fair to say, could really imagine what the new civilization would be like. But despite substantial inner uncertainty, they projected a faith in



Russia's future that their Westerner opponents often derided but may unconsciously have envied. Herzen once noted acidly that Russia's principal influence upon Europe consisted in the dispatching of troops in times of radical upheaval, but he was to develop a messianism akin to that of the Slavophiles.

The Populist notion of Russia's "separate path" and unique destiny centered on the idea that the communal institutions of the peasantry were a primitive form of protosocialism and that when the peasantry finally erupted into revolution a socialist society either would emerge, more or less spontaneously, from the upheaval or could be brought about through a combination of the people's instinct and the political leadership of the intelligentsia. Now this general idea was often expressed in a primitive and sloganistic fashion in the 1860s, and later as well. But one might go into considerable detail about the many technical problems that would have to be faced. What should the state apparatus do in the postrevolutionary period? How strong should it be? What kind of aid should the state render to the popular institutions, political and economic, that the spirit of the people would bring into existence? What form would those institutions take? And a central question in the debates between those who trusted the people wholeheartedly and those who did not: How long would the state have to endure? Populists tinged with Jacobinism (in some cases more than tinged) tended to stress the importance of the revolutionary state. Those of a more anarchist cast of mind—and there was a strong anarchist tendency in Populism—feared that the revolutionary state might turn into a new kind of despotism, that it might separate itself from the people's aspirations rather than embody them. Bakunin, in his *Letters to a Frenchman*, wrote that

Throughout the world the authoritarian revolutionists have done very little to promote revolutionary activity, primarily because *they always wanted to make the Revolution by themselves, by their own authority and their own power*. This could not fail to severely constrict the scope of revolutionary action because it is impossible, even for the most energetic and enterprising authoritarian revolutionary, to understand and deal effectively with all the manifold problems



generated by the Revolution. For every dictatorship, be it exercised by an individual or collectively by relatively few individuals, is necessarily very circumscribed, very shortsighted, and its limited perception cannot, therefore, penetrate the depth and encompass the whole complex range of popular life; just as it is impossible for even the most gigantic vessel to contain the depths and vastness of the ocean. . . .

What should the revolutionary authorities—and there should be as few of them as possible—do to organize and spread the Revolution? They must promote the Revolution not by issuing decrees but by stirring the masses to action. They must under no circumstances foist any artificial organization whatsoever upon the masses. On the contrary, they should foster the self-organization of the masses into autonomous bodies, federated from the bottom upward.<sup>15</sup>

On another occasion, Bakunin accused “doctrinaire socialists” (and although he was referring chiefly to Marxists, his accusation was directed against a much larger group) of trying to overthrow existing regimes in order to create a dictatorship of their own. Such socialists, he angrily claimed,

... are the enemies of contemporary governments only because they wish to replace them. They are enemies of the present governmental structure, because it excludes the possibility of their dictatorship. At the same time they are the most devoted friends of governmental power. For if the revolution destroyed this power by actually freeing the masses, it would deprive this pseudorevolutionary minority of any hope to harness the masses in order to make them the beneficiaries of their own government policy.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1880s and 1890s, in part because the Populists were then faced with a full-dress attack from the Russian Marxists, the debate about the possibilities inherent in peasant institutions took on a greater economic complexity and sophistication. In 1882, V. Vorontsov, a rather unrevolutionary Populist, wrote a book entitled *The Fate of Capitalism in Russia*.<sup>17</sup> There was scarcely a trace of Slavophile messianism in this well-argued and influential economic treatise. Rather, Vorontsov stressed that for a variety of economic reasons—chiefly her late entry into the industrialization process—Russia could not follow the capitalist path best



represented by English development. The industrial products of Russian capitalism would never be able to capture their share of the world market, and the peasantry was too poor and backward to provide the necessary market, either; therefore the government should abandon its efforts to promote capitalism (which were beginning to be noticeable by this time) and devote itself to strengthening the communes and the small producers' cooperatives. Branches of industry that were of necessity very large and demanded large amounts of capital should be nationalized.

Vorontsov simply urged this point of view on the Russian government. But his program might have been expected to appeal more to moderate Populist radicals than to the men actually in charge of the Ministry of Finance; in that sense, one might say that it was a blueprint for postrevolutionary action. As Richard Pipes points out,<sup>18</sup> Vorontsov's scheme was "by no means utopian," and in fact was not unlike the so-called New Economic Policy (NEP) that Lenin introduced in 1921.

In the 1860s and the 1870s, however, the idea of the "separate path" was discussed in much simpler and more moral terms. One can see in it a strong dose of nationalism and wounded pride: like the early Christians, Russian radicals believed that "the last shall be first." Slavophile and Populist proponents of Russia as the creator of a new civilization had a good deal in common, despite their differences as to what that new civilization would be like.

One of the most significant aspects of the Slavophile position was that it separated the modern Russian state from Russian society and located Russian virtue in the latter. This hostility to the state was not set forth in clear, unambiguous language, even by Ivan Kireevsky, who came closest to directly expressing it. What we find instead is an attack on the despotic, rationalizing institutions of the West, coupled with a denunciation of Peter the Great for having attempted to import these institutions to Russia.

Khomiakov was a good deal more ambiguous on this point than Kireevsky. Khomiakov believed that the development of the autocracy was necessary for the creation of a strong and unified



Russia—but that necessity was tragic, in that the triumph of the autocracy meant wounding, seriously if not mortally, the communal basis of Russian society. Although he detested Peter the Great and his “Germanization” of Russia, Khomiakov was even willing, upon occasion, to approve some of Peter’s state-building policies.

Kireevsky, by contrast, never spoke of Peter’s achievements, and his picture of the premodern sovereign power in Russia is illuminating. The prince, to begin with, had the most limited power over the life of society: acting as a kind of supreme judge was about the extent of it. The various communities determined their own internal life in a traditional way and were directly influenced by the network of churches, monasteries, and other ecclesiastical centers that infused the social body with the spirit of Orthodoxy. The princes played a much larger role in foreign affairs, but the striking feature of Kireevsky’s tableau—which is, of course, of limited historical accuracy—is that Russian society lived its own life, undisturbed by the state.<sup>19</sup> All this changed with the coming of Peter the Great. The modern Russian state violated sacred tradition without let or hindrance and interfered in the life of its citizens to the very limits of its ability. To Kireevsky, although for political reasons he was cautious about saying so, the principal bearer of modern rationalism in Russia was not the middle class, as in England or France, but the Romanov dynasty and its state apparatus, no matter how “conservative” they appeared or believed themselves to be.

As time passed, the antistate element in Slavophilism conflicted with Russian nationalism (which was already obvious in the first Slavophile generation, particularly in Khomiakov). Among the second-generation Slavophiles, Iury Samarin, for example, found it possible to serve the state in a variety of capacities, from emancipating the serfs to fact-finding missions in rebellious Poland. It is in Populism that we find Slavophile antistatism picked up and developed. Sometimes Populist expressions of the opposition between state and society have an uncannily Slavophile ring, even when they are most “radical.” Georgy Plekha-



nov, writing in 1880 when he was still a Populist, described the phenomenon in the following terms:

According to us, the inner history of Russia consists only in the long tragedy-filled tales of the struggle to the death between two forms of collective life which are diametrically opposed: the *obshchina* which springs from the people and the form which is at the same time statist and individualist. This struggle becomes bloody and violent like a storm when the masses are in movement during the revolts of Razin and Pugachev. And it has never stopped for one moment, though taking on the most varying forms.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, many of the Populists believed not only that the state was deeply opposed to the interests and human development of the Russian people but that it was weak and artificial as well; it did not grow organically out of Russian soil; it corresponded to the interests of no segment of the population, not even the gentry. Franco Venturi, in describing the attitude of the People's Will revolutionaries toward the Russian state, writes that they found it "very different from Western states. How was it possible to describe it as 'a commission of the plenipotentiaries of the ruling classes'? In fact, of course, it was an independent organization, hierarchical and disciplined, 'which would hold the people in economic and political slavery even if there were no privileged class in existence.'"<sup>21</sup>

To almost all Marxists, such a conception of the state was absurd, impossible by definition, as it were. Marx, in 1882, had supplied a foreward to Plekhanov's Russian translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, in which he was by no means totally unsympathetic to Populist aspirations. Marx speculated that if the outbreak of a revolution in Russia touched off the proletarian revolution in the West, Russia might indeed be able to utilize the peasant commune to pass immediately to a higher stage of development.<sup>22</sup> And Marx and Engels were both deeply moved and impressed by the struggle of the People's Will terrorists, which finally resulted in the death of Alexander II in March 1881. But the Populist notion of a state without real class content was impossible to swallow. The state, to Marx, was an "epiphenomenon



of the class struggle,"<sup>23</sup> which would disappear only with the transition to communism. As Engels put the matter:

The state is therefore by no means a power imposed on society from without; just as little is it "the reality of the moral idea," "the image and reality of reason," as Hegel maintains. Rather, it is a product of society at a particular stage of development; it is the admission that this society has involved itself in insoluble self-contradiction and is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms, which it is powerless to exorcise. But in order that these antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, shall not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, a power, apparently standing above society, has become necessary to moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"; and this power, arisen out of society, but placing itself above it and increasingly alienating itself from it, is the state.

. . . As the state arose from the need to keep class antagonisms in check, but also arose in the thick of the fight between the classes, it is normally the state of the most powerful, economically ruling class, which . . . becomes also the politically ruling class, and so acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.<sup>24</sup>

What should we make of these structural similarities between Slavophilism and Populism? How should they be understood? The vague term "influence" is of no use here, though in some cases it might be applied in a highly specific fashion. Many young women and men in the late 1850s, and subsequently, became Populists without being at all aware of Slavophilism. And even in those cases in which individuals had been attracted to Slavophile ideas and later became Populists, we must ask *why* they made this transition, and why they made it when they did.

In discussing the relationship between Slavophilism and Populism, we must return to one of the large themes of this study: the relationship between the educated minority in Russia and the masses of the population, the peasantry. The Slavophiles, like the Populists, had a moral vision of communality, which they found missing in the Russian society of their day, which they found deeply attractive, and which they persuaded themselves would be part of a better future for Russia. Both parties found this ideal embodied in the peasantry's way of life. But both found



it extremely difficult to make any contact with the source of their values. There is thus some continuity in the vision of the good society entertained by significant portions of the Russian elite over several generations; the quality of Russian life under a crude, rather inefficient bureaucratized monarchy obviously made Russians yearn in a special way for communal forms of life, as an Englishman or a Frenchman did not. And the survival of the peasant commune in Russia offered an indigenous model, the adoption of which could also minister to wounded national pride.

In confronting the question of the "rise" or beginnings of Populism, we must not fall into the trap of supposing that Slavophile modes of thinking suddenly came to a halt in the late 1850s and Populism took over. Slavophile influences persisted, in various forms, throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The writers and critics who in the 1860s gathered around the journals *Time (Vremia)* and *Epoch*—the Dostoevsky brothers, Apollon Grigor'ev, Nikolai Strakhov—were known as *pochvenniki*, from the Russian term *pochva* (which means "soil," and as used by these writers picked up some of the nationalist connotation of the German *Boden*). Here a more conservative communal ideal persisted, along with the Slavophile hatred of "abstract reason" and the insistence on the religiosity of the Russian people. In the next generation, the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ëv based much of his philosophical speculation on Slavophile themes, and a good deal of the so-called Russian religious renaissance of the twentieth century indicates an intellectual and spiritual debt to Slavophilism. Nicolas Berdyaev in particular reveals his Slavophile roots in his advocacy of a Christian and irrationalist reintegration of the human personality.

Still, the obvious fact is that, beginning in the late 1850s, most of the Russian intelligentsia was much more receptive to an activist, socialist communalism than to the socially passive, religious kind, where human reintegration would be a mystical and private achievement. This preference can largely be explained by the reforming excitement of the new era, by the sense of human possibility and the desirability of change with which *obshchestvo* responded to the death of Nicholas I. And the pros-



pect that emerged of the *liberation* of the peasant brought a kind of anticipatory atmosphere that was more hospitable to visions of radical social reform than to those of what amounted to religious conversion; people tended to project their communal vision boldly into the future, rather than to try to excavate it from the past.

Of course the intelligentsia was not uniformly radical in the 1860s, and not all of *obshchestvo* was thirsty for communal forms of salvation and human reintegration. The journalistic success of the renegade Westerner Mikhail Katkov, following the Polish revolt of 1863, showed that many educated Russians would become devoted readers of journals whose point of view was unabashedly patriotic and Pan-Slav.<sup>25</sup> And although *obshchestvo* became more Populist during the 1860s, it soon became clear that radical reform or revolution was not the simple, almost automatic affair it had seemed to many students and young radicals between 1859 and 1862. In fact, radical discouragement with "the masses" is one of the salient characteristics of the Left intelligentsia between 1863 and 1870.

After the death of Emperor Nicholas in 1855, reformist sentiment mounted rapidly in Russia; what was needed was a "progressive" ideology that could convincingly assert a socialist future. But after 1848 and the Crimean War such an ideological vision could not be too "European"; it had to take full account of Russia's impatience with the Western masters to whom she had so long been apprenticed. Above all, it had to put the Russian people, the *narod*, at the heart of things—not as the bearers of a timeless religious truth (as the Slavophiles had seen them); the *narod* now had to be young, vital, strong, and the vision had to be social.

It was Alexander Herzen who produced the intellectual synthesis and the political vocabulary for the young radicals after 1855. He was the founding father of Populism. His basic ideas, drawn from the arsenals of both Slavophiles and Westerners (and owing something to Proudhon as well), were simple and wonderfully uplifting. That they were lacking in economic sophistication and did not provide detailed blueprints for the future in no way



diminished their appeal. Once they had become the common property of the intelligentsia, Herzen's successors, beginning with N. G. Chernyshevsky, could rephrase and refine them and provide various economic underpinnings for them.

Born illegitimate into a wealthy and aristocratic Moscow family,\* Herzen as a young man had gravitated toward French socialism, had undergone political exile and returned to lead the Westerner party in the Moscow salons of the 1840s.<sup>26</sup> Much of the significance of his early life consists in the process by which his basically aristocratic sense of liberty was transmuted into socialist conviction. His mature opinions began to take shape in 1847, when he was thirty-five years old and in effect already in European exile. He disliked what he saw of French and Italian society on his travels: even before experiencing the Revolution of 1848 in Paris, Herzen was disposed to be "disillusioned" with Europe. When the new French Republic called in regular army troops against the workers of Paris in the June Days, Herzen repudiated not only the French bourgeoisie but Paris (now a "decrepit vampire," sucking the blood of her working-class victims) and the French radical tradition that had sustained him so long. This was his first large area of agreement with his former opponents, the Slavophiles: that modern Europe was politically, intellectually, and morally bankrupt. "Europe is approaching a terrible cataclysm," he wrote in his essay *The Russian People and Socialism* (1851).

The world of the Middle Ages has come to an end. The world of feudalism is expiring. The religious and political revolutions are petering out under the weight of their own complete impotence. They have great achievements to their credit, but they have failed to complete their tasks. They have stripped throne and altar of the prestige they once enjoyed, but they have not established the era of freedom. They have lit new desires in the hearts of men but they have not provided ways of satisfying them. Parliamentarianism, Protestantism—these are mere prevarications, temporary measures, attempts to stave off the flood, which can arrest only for a short time

\*The family's name was Iakovlev; the name "Herzen," meaning child "of the heart," indicates his illegitimate status.



the process of death and rebirth. The time for them has passed. Since 1848 it has become apparent that no amount of delving into Roman law, of barren casuistry, of thin philosophic deism, of sterile religious rationalism can hold back society from fulfilling its destiny.<sup>27</sup>

In this welter of violence and decay, wrote Herzen (not altogether accurately), "men's eyes turn involuntarily to the East." He then went to considerable pains to disassociate the Russian people from the Russian government, speaking rather vaguely of a Pan-Slav Federation of the future and remarking that "the historic forms of the state have never answered to the national ideal of the Slavs, an ideal which is vague, instinctive if you like, yet by the same token gives promise for the future of a truly remarkable vitality."<sup>28</sup>

Developing this dichotomy between the people and the state, Herzen spoke of a curious "detachment" or "apathy," with which the Russian people have historically responded to cataclysmic changes visited upon them from above or outside: the reception of Christianity, or (and here the Slavophile note is strong) how "five hundred years later, a part of Russia accepted in just the same manner a civilization that had been ordered from abroad and bore upon it a German trademark."<sup>29</sup> Rebutting Jules Michelet's silly charge that "the Russian is a liar and a thief," Herzen noted that

The Russian peasant who has, as you have rightly observed, a strong aversion to every form of landed property, who is improvident and indolent by temperament, has gradually and imperceptibly found himself caught up in the tentacles of the German bureaucracy and the feudal power. He has submitted to this degrading yoke with, I agree, the passivity of despair, but he has never believed either in the authority of his lord, or in the justice of the courts, or in the equity of the administration. For almost two hundred years, his whole life has been one long, dumb, passive opposition to the existing order of things: he has endured oppression, he has groaned under it: but he has never accepted anything that goes on outside the life of the rural commune.<sup>30</sup>

The Slavophile elements here are striking but they are undergoing changes: the separation of the real life of the people



from the despotic, alien force of the state, identified as "German"; the hostility to the notion of landed property and the focus on the rural commune as the center of life. Even the description of the peasantry's indolence and improvidence is not far from the Slavophile point of view, although the Slavophiles were usually less forthright about it. But Herzen laid more stress on the pure *oppression* that had been the peasants' lot, and there is a hint of possible rebelliousness in the future. There is no mention of the religious element in pre-Petrine culture: the communalism of the peasant appears fundamentally secular. And Herzen dealt with the peasantry's attachment to the Tsar the way almost all socialist (and liberal) historians have chosen to do: the peasant regards the Tsar as a mythic "embodiment of justice," as an "avenger of evils."<sup>31</sup> Apart from the idealized Tsar and—Herzen admitted—the clergy to some extent, the peasant is hostile to every segment of Russian society. Through laws that he in no way understands and that have nothing to do with his own way of life—which, like the state power itself, were imposed on him from above—the bureaucracy and the nobility attempt to squeeze from the peasant every ounce of toil and as much money as they possibly can. Against this oppression the peasants employ the only weapons available—cunning and duplicity. "Outside the commune," Herzen concluded, "there are no obligations for him—there is simply violence."<sup>32</sup>

Herzen's analysis of the peasants' way of life in their own milieu was quite as fanciful as that of the Slavophiles—only secular and protosocialist.

"There is one fact," he wrote, "that has never been denied by anyone who has any real first-hand knowledge of the Russian people."

And that is that they very rarely cheat one another. An almost boundless good faith prevails amongst them: contracts and written agreements are quite unheard of.

Problems connected with surveying are necessarily extremely complicated on account of the perpetual subdivision of the land according to the number of people working on it. And yet the peace



of the Russian countryside is never disturbed by any complaints or litigation. . . . The petty differences that arise are quickly settled either by the elders or by the commune: everyone abides by such decisions without reservation. The same thing happens in the nomadic communes of artisans (the *artel*').<sup>33</sup>

And, he claimed, communal bonds are even closer when the peasants are not Orthodox, but dissenters. Finally he came to the point:

The commune has preserved the Russian people from Mongol barbarism, from Imperial civilization, from the Europeanized landlords and from the German bureaucracy: the organic life of the commune has persisted despite all attempts made on it by authority, badly mauled though it has been at times. By good fortune it has survived right into the period that witnesses the rise of Socialism in Europe.

For Russia this has been a most happy Providence.<sup>34</sup>

The historical role of both the gentry and the autocracy, Herzen believed, was finished. The gentry had been created by Peter the Great to staff the army and bureaucracy that he brought into being. It had then been instrumental in bringing Western ideas into Russia (which Herzen, it appears, still regarded as essential). But its usefulness is over; its feebleness and rootlessness stand fully revealed. And the government, Herzen remarked mordantly, "which originally cut itself off from the people in the name of civilization, has now, a hundred years later, cut itself off from civilization in the name of absolutism."<sup>35</sup> For civilization, in nineteenth-century Europe, is crucially bound up with liberalism and socialism, so the "civilizing" role of the autocracy had come to an end. From the accession of Nicholas I, "the sole aim of Tsarism has been Tsarism, ruling for ruling's sake. . . . But autocracy for autocracy's sake is ultimately an impossibility: it is too pointless, too sterile."<sup>36</sup>

For the Slavophiles, the reign of Peter the Great was the focal point in the break with the idyllic Russian past. Peter's reign was less crucial for Herzen—it merely inaugurated the latest phase in the far older story of the oppression of the Russian people—



but one feels the memory of the arguments with the Slavophiles a few years earlier about what Peter's reign had meant. In the 1840s Herzen had defended Peter; now he regarded him with more mixed feelings as the consolidator of the latest and most ruthless phase of the oppression of the Russian people, the creator of the gentry and modern bureaucracy. Peter the Westernizer and civilizer was not mentioned.

X The Slavophiles had no real prescription for the autocracy and the gentry. They clearly felt that the Emperor should in some way, by some social alchemy, transform himself into the "pious Tsar" of old. He should curb, if not eliminate, the bureaucracy; he should allow the body of the Russian people to infuse in him the old Orthodox, communal spirit. He should again become a benevolent patriarch, instead of a semirationalist importer of secular Western ideas. But this was scarcely a program. The Slavophiles were oddly silent, too, about their own estate, the gentry. Many of their attitudes were aristocratic, but there was no place for the gentry as a group in their murky vision of Russia's renewal, except the assumption that people like themselves would have to take the lead in creating the new Christian and communal Russia. It is plausible that had the Slavophiles been able to function in a more political fashion, they would have provided a distinctly agrarian kind of leadership; their opposition to the crown might have become more outspokenly aristocratic and at the same time more mundane. But with the concrete defense of interests so difficult a matter, their elitism retained its distinctly historical quality: more redolent of the older aristocratic groups that had been ground under the heel of Muscovite absolutism than of the real social existence of the gentry in their own time.

Herzen's prescriptions were neater and simpler. Both the autocracy and the gentry had made the rather malign (though undeniably significant) contribution to Russia's history that they had to make. It was time for them to leave the stage.

Herzen found the Russian government in the time of Nicholas bankrupt—and so was Europe after 1848. Europe, he thought,



had "stated the problem" of the opposition between the individual and society but had not solved it. And Europe,

now on the point of taking the first step forward in a social revolution, is confronted by a country that can provide an actual instance of an attempt—a crude, barbaric attempt, perhaps, but still an attempt of a sort—in the direction of the division of the land amongst those who work it. And observe that this lesson is not provided by civilized Russia but by the people themselves in their daily lives. We Russians who have absorbed European civilization cannot hope to be more than a means to an end—the yeast in the leavening—a bridge between the Russian people and revolutionary Europe.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, Herzen spoke of people like himself, of their feelings, of the literature they have produced, and of their historical position, in accents that recall Pëtr Chaadaev:

The true character of Russian thought, whether in poetry or speculation, emerges only in a fully developed, vital form after the accession of Nicholas. The distinctive traits of this movement are a new and tragic sense of right and wrong, an implacable spirit of negation, a bitter irony, a tortured self-questioning. Sometimes a note of wild laughter accompanies it, but it is laughter without gaiety. . . . The emancipated Russian is the most independent creature in the world. And what indeed could there be to restrain him? A sense of the past? . . . But then isn't the starting point of modern Russia just the denial of tradition and national sentiment? . . . The only element in our tradition which we accept is that involved in our organic, our national way of life: and that is inherent in our very being: it is in our blood, it acts upon us more like an instinct than like some external authority to which we feel we must bend our wills. We are independent because we possess nothing. There are literally no demands upon our affections. All our memories are tinged with bitterness and resentment. The fruits of civilization and learning were offered us at the end of the knout.<sup>38</sup>

But, as had the Slavophiles before him, Herzen perceived the advantages inherent in Russia's backward and benighted state. Authority in Russia was naked force; the cards were on the table. The Russian revolution would never replace Tsar Nicholas by a multitude of "other Tsars," and by this Herzen meant the disin-



genuous, hypocritical, and repressive apparatus of the bourgeois republic. "Russia," he proclaimed, "will never be Protestant. Russia will never be *juste-milieu*." And he concluded on a note of mingled hope and pessimism: there were the Russian masses, still in the apathetic slumber of those who had long been oppressed; and there were those few like Bakunin and Petrashevsky\* who had made efforts, as had Herzen himself, to advance the cause of liberty in Russia. Clearly Herzen believed, as had Ivan Kireevsky, that the virtue residing in the people could found the new society only with the assistance of people like Bakunin and himself—with the help, in effect, of the intelligentsia.

By 1851, Herzen's exile had begun officially: he had decided some months before not to obey the government's orders to return to Russia and had thus automatically become an émigré. In that year he published both *The Russian People and Socialism* and a much lengthier discussion of the same issues, entitled *On the Development of Revolutionary Ideas in Russia*. The first two editions were in French; it appeared in Russia for the first time when it was clandestinely printed by P. G. Zaichnevsky, a particularly militant student radical of the early 1860s. Significantly, the translation was dedicated to the students of the University of Moscow.<sup>39</sup>

At the outset of the book, Herzen spoke of the departure from Russia that was to begin his lifelong exile, although of course he did not know that at the time. He described the peasant villages that he was leaving: tiny clusters of huts, dwarfed by the great forests and the vast, snow-covered plains. And he turned quickly to the character and style of their peasant inhabitants, whose way of life, he observed, had changed very little since the horsemen of Genghis Khan had surprised them so many centuries before—a way of life, as he put it, somewhere between geology and history. He spoke of the gulf that separated the village from both gentry and bureaucracy, and of the qualities of the peasant him-

\*M. V. Butashevich-Petrashkevsky was a junior official in the Russian Foreign Ministry and a disciple of Fourier. His "circle" was broken up by the police in April 1849. Petrashevsky died in Siberia in 1867.



self—still a “barbarian,” but of the kind whose historical life had not yet begun, rather than of the kind whose historical role had come and gone.

He has been conquered but he is no lackey. His rough, democratic and patriarchal language has not been schooled in ante-chambers. His qualities of masculine beauty have endured the dual slavery of tsar and landlord. The peasant of Great Russia and the Ukraine has a most penetrating intelligence and an almost southern vivacity, which one is astonished to find in the North. He speaks well and much; the habit of being always with his neighbors has rendered him communicative.<sup>40</sup>

And Herzen went on to compare the two posting stations on either side of the Russian-Livonian border: the Russian one chaotic and disorganized, with a Russian officer shouting for service, threatening the lackadaisical peasants with all sorts of visitations and retributions from the higher authorities, and eventually exhausting himself, while the peasants dealt with him in the time-honored manner: confessing their derelictions in a singsong tone, accepting the abuse, and waiting for him to exhaust himself in futile threats. The Livonian station, by contrast, was neat and clean, dominated by a middle-class Lutheran spirit of tidiness, efficiency, adherence to regulations, and German patriotism, with a strong dose of servility. Across the Russian border, the indigenous inhabitants had remained savages while their Baltic German masters oppressed them tenaciously but with a defensiveness that revealed a loss of vitality and an isolation from the main paths of historical development. The communal institutions and spirit of Russia were lacking. However disorganized and—for the upper class—inefficient the Russian village and posting station may have been, it contained a vitality and a communalism that stamped it as having a historical destiny. The oppressive but faded world of Germany was—behind its orderly and impressive facade—already a thing of the past. The Baltic Germans had a “fixed morality,” the Russians a “moral instinct.” The Russians, in the diluted Hegelian argot of the day, were a “young” people, the Germans an “old” one. And Herzen grandly



X extended the contrast: it was not merely the Baltic Germans or the Germans, but all of Europe that was "old," that had played out its historical role; it was "the Slavic world" that was "young." Only in America, Herzen suggested,<sup>41</sup> might the great ideas of European civilization yet be realized, on a soil "less encumbered with ruins."

Concluding his introduction of "Young Russia," Herzen sketched the rise of Russian power since Peter the Great—a rude, coarse, demanding power that seated itself uninvited at the council table of Europe. And he then had the "temerity," as he put it, to suggest that, at bottom, those millions of Russians and the working masses of Europe were at one: without knowing it, they had a common enemy, "the old feudal and monarchical edifice," and a common aspiration, "the social revolution."

The Emperor Nicholas can at will execute designs, the sense of which escapes him, humiliate the sterile arrogance of France and the majestic prudence of England—we do not have the least pity for those invalids. But what he cannot do is prevent the formation of another league behind his back. He cannot prevent Russian intervention from being the coup de grâce for all the monarchs of the continent, for the entire reaction and the beginning of the armed social struggle—terrible and decisive.

The imperial power of the tsar will not survive that struggle. Victor or vanquished, it belongs to the past; it is not Russian, it is profoundly German—byzantinized German. So it has two titles to death.

And we have two titles to life—the socialist element and youth.

"Sometimes young people die too," a most distinguished man said to me in London, as we were discussing the slavic question.

"Certainly," I answered, "but what is far more certain is that old people always die."<sup>42</sup>

X Herzen's view of Russian historical development from the Middle Ages was strikingly close to that of Khomiakov:<sup>43</sup> both depicted medieval Russian society as isolated, local and communal in its social organization. Herzen, like the Slavophiles, now viewed the prince in Old Russia as benevolent, patriarchal, and limited in his functions, but Herzen laid heavy stress on the prince's lack of an organic connection with the territory over



which he ruled.\* For the Slavophiles, of course, Christianity was at the very heart of Old Russian culture and intimately bound up with the communal order, while Herzen saw the Christianization of Russia as just one more of those cataclysms that periodically affected Russian society, like the Mongol invasions or Peter's Westernization policies.

With the consolidation of power in Russia by the city of Moscow and the eventual creation of the unified Muscovite Tsardom, a new stage in Russian development began. Herzen, like Khomiakov, admitted "the necessity of centralization," but in the next breath said vaguely that had events not decreed otherwise, the cosmopolitan and "free" city of Novgorod might have united Russia in quite a different fashion, in which the communal institutions of society might have been preserved. Like the Decembrists before him, Herzen found the commercial and oligarchical city-state of Novgorod a possible basis for a very different kind of national evolution (a highly dubious proposition—rather as if a German radical had suggested that the commercial bourgeoisie of Bremen or Lübeck might have united Germany).

Herzen regarded Muscovite absolutism as rooted in two important historical developments: the Mongol conquest of Russia in the thirteenth century and the attachment of the Byzantine clerical establishment to Russia after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In combating the Mongol hegemony over Russia, the Muscovite tsars took over a good deal of the absolutist pretensions of the Mongol khans. And the new wave of Byzantine influence that followed the end of the Eastern Empire led to the investment of the Tsar with the quasi-divinity that had previously characterized the Byzantine Basileus.

Meanwhile, the condition of the common people continued to deteriorate. Serfdom was introduced, and the last vestiges of popular liberty were obliterated. Henceforward the peasantry became apathetic under their impossible burdens, but flared up periodically into savage revolts whenever the power of the cen-

\*In this connection, Herzen stresses the so-called rotation system, in which princes of the Riurik dynasty moved from city to city, according to their seniority within a single generation. While the system functioned, it did help to prevent princes from developing strong local ties.



tral government seemed momentarily weakened. At the same time, the communalism of the Russian people and its institutions survived, submerged but not broken. So Herzen retained the dichotomy between society and the state that the Slavophiles had suggested, but he made the separation much more explicit. And he saw Christianity not as a crucial component of peasant society but, in its Byzantine garb, as an essential ally of the absolutist state. The Muscovite autocracy had achieved unlimited power over the other cities of Russia and, in the economic realm, the landlords had achieved a similar authority over "their" peasants.

Herzen regarded Peter the Great, as had the Slavophiles, as a "crowned revolutionary," the first emancipated individual in Russian history. To the Slavophiles, his appearance was a national tragedy. Herzen is ambivalent. On the one hand, Peter swept away the musty, stagnant, deadly old Byzantine Russia and introduced a more mobile and fluid society—at least at the top. Russia became a society more open to individual talent and more secular. On the other hand, Peter extended the sway of the state even further, and its oppressive power became even more terrible for the bulk of the population. At any rate, we can see that whatever Herzen may have felt about the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, his concern for individual liberty and his secularism in particular link him closely with the dominant values of eighteenth-century radicalism. Here his contrast with the Slavophiles is sharpest. His socialist communalism must incorporate and transcend the values of the eighteenth century, not repudiate them.

Herzen quite properly observes that for the most part the radicalism of eighteenth-century thought was deprived of its bite and seriousness in Russia, becoming a fashionable irony and skepticism about traditional values and institutions, a luxurious sensuality, but largely failing to produce a militant and critical spirit. Nevertheless, in particular during Catherine's reign, both Russian culture and the upper echelons of Russian society were to a degree humanized, and the ground was prepared both for the great flowering of Russian literature in the nineteenth century and for the development of a critical and humanitarian radical-



ism in a segment of the Russian elite, the initial manifestation of which was the Freemasonry of Nikolai Novikov.

Meanwhile, among the peasantry, the memory of Stenka Razin persisted in folkloric form and helped shape the massive revolt of Emel'ian Pugachëv, which broke out in 1773. The notion that one might understand the revolutionary nature of the Russian people through a study of its folklore was taken up by a good many Populists, as we shall see when we turn to the career of I. A. Khudiakov, one of many Populist ethnographers. These radical Romantics looked to the oral tradition as a kind of unself-conscious history of the *narod* by itself. The key to the militant and rebellious nature of the peasant lay in the tribulations visited upon it from above, and in the great spasms of popular revolt that had previously shaken the country. Thus the folklore of Razin and Pugachëv was largely the discovery of these radical ethnographers; previous collectors had not wanted to find such things. The Slavophile analogue of these Populist collectors was Pëtr Kireevsky, Ivan's brother, who tried to find what he regarded as the religious, peaceful, and communal archetype of the peasantry in *his* monumental investigations.<sup>44</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century, Herzen believed, the Russian government remained *the* revolutionary force in Russia. The nineteenth century changed that decisively. The entire Russian nation rose against the French in 1812 and drove them out. The peasants reaped none of the rewards of their heroism and returned to their former condition. But elements of the Russian elite were not so accommodating. A "chivalric sense of honor and personal dignity," hitherto unobserved among Russia's pseudo-aristocracy, was born out of the Russian triumph, which meshed, for many military officers, with the realization that much in Russian government and administration needed reform. When Alexander I would not listen to these proud Napoleonic veterans, they went underground and formed the series of secret societies that ended in the Decembrist Revolt of 1825.

In one sense, the Russian government had lost its position of revolutionary leadership (revolutionary in the sense of Westernizing). In another sense, it had not, for it continued most arbitrar-



ily to enforce its will on the helpless body of society. But apart from a broad commitment to monarchical stability the government of Nicholas did not base itself on real past traditions or on its own previous legislation: what it decreed today, it might sweep away tomorrow; what it ordered in one province, it might forbid in another. The "revolutionary" tradition of Peter the Great was alive, but in a purposeless and mutilated condition. And here the Slavophile Ivan Kireevsky would certainly have agreed: like Herzen, he found the Russian government not really "conservative," but no longer revolutionary.

Pavel Pestel and his Decembrist colleagues, despite their failure and despite the fact that they had no real connection with the peasantry, were the first real Russian revolutionaries, or, as Herzen not quite accurately put it, the first to consider involving the people in the revolution. They set a precedent; they became a symbol; they founded a mythology. Above all, they broke the silence, they shattered the passivity that had so long dominated the Russian elite, and at this crucial point in Russian history, the Russian government finally and definitively lost its function as the bearer of progress. Russia's future was henceforth to be in the hands of others—at first of her writers.

Under the sterile despotism of Nicholas, a new figure appeared in Russia, the so-called superfluous man, alienated from his repulsive surroundings, profoundly bored, with no outlet for his energies except in empty and frivolous amusement, which only half diverted him and left him with his incurable feelings of boredom and disgust. Pushkin's Evgeny Onegin was the first and greatest artistic statement of this type; Lermontov's Pechorin, the demonic protagonist of *A Hero of Our Time*, was his "younger brother." And many other renderings followed. These figures could neither live in Nicholas's Russia nor find any effective means to oppose it, and this particular combination of revulsion against their society and lack of the inner force necessary to take action against it was their signature.

So while the deadening and meaningless government of Nicholas engaged itself in the exhausting game of self-preservation, Russian literature did its subtle work of undermining and expos-



ing, creating a gnawing sense of discontent and dissatisfaction. And beneath the surface, the Russian people, who took no part in the intellectual movement, also began to stir. Incidents of insubordination, minor revolt, attacks on landlords, began to increase. To Europeans, Russia appeared a bastion of stability, an impregnable colossus. But the old regime was dying—profoundly, if semiconsciously, aware of the fact—and new historical forces were maturing. Subversive ideas circulated, especially among young people. Moscow, and particularly the university there, became the center of this still tentative dissidence. The opposition between Moscow and St. Petersburg, now more than a century old, had changed its essential character. Moscow was the center of the young and the innovative. St. Petersburg, once the center of Russia's progressive forces, now became the sterile bastion of the *status quo*, the barracks, parade ground, and chancellery of Nicholas's drama of self-preservation.\*

The quickening of Russia's intellectual life, in particular its critical aspect, almost imperceptible at first, became perceptible in journalistic form, despite the government's unceasing efforts to destroy or at least castrate these publications. Herzen discussed a good many of the representatives of the journalism of the 1830s and 1840s, whom he knew so well from his youth and early manhood: Vissarion Belinsky, "the type of studious Moscow youth, the martyr of his doubts and thoughts," palpitating "with indignation and trembling with rage at the eternal spectacle of Russian absolutism."<sup>45</sup> And then there was Osip Senkovsky, the editor of the *Library for Reading*, a pliant sensualist, without convictions, but who undermined the government unintentionally with his epicurean cynicism. Most striking of all these symptoms was the appearance, in 1836, of Pëtr Chaadaev's famous *Philosophical Letter* in the *Moscow Telescope* (*Teleskop*).

\*The historian Nicholas Riasanovsky recounts an anecdote about Nicholas's childhood that seems to confirm Herzen's analysis more graphically than a description of the policies of the mature man. "Even as a child, 'whenever he built a summer house, for his nurse or his governess, out of chairs, earth or toys, he never forgot to fortify it with guns—for protection.' " And Riasanovsky adds that "he grew to be the chief military engineer of his country, specializing in fortresses, and still later, as emperor, he staked all on making the entire land an impregnable fortress." See Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), p. 10.



Chaadaev indicted Russia for having fallen away from the Roman Catholic Church and hence from the mainstream of Western history; as a result, he concluded, Russia had no past and no future. Chaadaev was officially declared mad by Nicholas and ordered to undergo medical treatment in an institution. (Russian governments, from that day to this, have had difficulty deciding whether their opponents are criminals or madmen, a problem by no means resolved as these words are written.)

In his final chapter, Herzen turned to the great intellectual drama of the 1840s: the debate between the Slavophiles and the Westerners. He began by noting that "the time of reaction against the reform of Peter I has come, not only for the government, which has retreated from its own principle and renounced Western civilization, in the name of which Peter I had trampled on [Russian] nationality, but also for those men whom the government had detached from the people, under the pretext of civilization, and whom it began to hang when they became civilized."<sup>46</sup> So Herzen approved of the posing of "the national question," and he again revealed his deep ambivalence about the work of Peter the Great.

He did not approve of the way in which the Slavophiles dealt with "the national question," feeling that it was neither possible nor desirable to return to the stagnant despotism of the Muscovite tsars and the Byzantine Church. Herzen defended Peter I against the broadsides of the Slavophiles: Peter's work had been in part beneficial, not only because he had opened Russia to the cruel but bracing process of Westernization but also because he had struck out remorselessly against what was stagnant and decrepit.

Herzen vehemently denied the tie between the Orthodoxy of Byzantium and the communal social organization that he and the Slavophiles both cherished. The Byzantine Church never championed the cause of the people; on the contrary, Herzen observed, it instructed the Russian tsars in the ways of despotism and commanded the people to blind obedience. The Russian people did not wish to exchange their German bondage for the old Byzantine one, said Herzen; they wished to liberate themselves.



Having indicted the Slavophile program, Herzen was quick to distinguish the Slavophiles from out-and-out government spokesmen. They were both revolutionary and conservative, and hence they could never really define their relationship to the autocracy on the one hand, or to their Westernizing opponents—Herzen himself and Belinsky—on the other. The Slavophiles understood much of the bloodstained futility of Western history, but they made a fatal mistake: they confused individual liberty—for Herzen one of the ultimate desiderata—with a narrow egoistic individualism. Here again we strike one of the great differences between communalism of the Right and Left: that of the Left insists on the preservation of the individual freedom gained in the liberal, “bourgeois” period of human development, seeking to expand it and reconcile it with communal values at a higher level. Communalism of the Right is disposed to deny liberal individualism outright, rather than looking to transcend it, to retreat to an idealized tableau of the past, rather than to imagine the future with the help of the past. The future must be won through struggle, Herzen cried, but the Slavophiles, despite their discontent, preached submission. Finally, the Slavophiles found the *narod* passive and God-fearing; the Populists, looking to the revolutionary future, *had* to find it rebellious. The Populist view of the destiny of Russia demanded the participation of the masses in its creation in a way that the Slavophile vision did not.

And yet Herzen’s final words are healing and reconciling and testified to the historical and even personal kinship that he felt with the Slavophiles: “The socialism which so profoundly, so definitively divides Europe into two enemy camps—do not the Slavophiles accept it as we do? It is the bridge upon which we can clasp each other’s hand.”<sup>47</sup>

In this important essay Herzen had taken the reactionary utopia of the Slavophiles and made of it a mythology both radical and nationalist.<sup>48</sup> Europe was exhausted. The Russian people were “young,” in the sense that their real history had not yet begun. The government, like Orthodox Christianity, was an alien, outside force, imposed upon the people, and almost no one, outside of the autocrat and the upper bureaucracy, had any stake



in its preservation. Unlike Europe, Russia was free of the past because the Russian *people* had none. Furthermore, they had never accepted European law, in particular private property. The peasant commune, that "free association of equals," with its periodic redistribution of land, pointed the way to the socialist future, a crucial part of which would be the reconciliation of Western individual liberty with the communal spirit of the Russian people.

Before the death of Nicholas, it was very difficult for Herzen to get these ideas into Russia. Furthermore, there was no very large audience for them. When Herzen established himself as a publicist in London, his first audience was Western European. But after the death of Nicholas, the situation changed in Russia, and Herzen's vision became relevant to the new hopes that were stirring in the educated public.

At this point, it became apparent that Herzen's attitude to the Russian Emperor and state was more ambivalent than it had appeared during his most radical phase, in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Herzen did admire the Westernizing program of Peter the Great, and even regarded the Russian state between the time of Peter and that of Alexander as "revolutionary." Only under Nicholas had the Russian state lost its sense of direction and become *merely* a millstone around the neck of the people. When Alexander II undertook to emancipate the serfs, Herzen came to feel that perhaps the "revolutionary" mission of the state was not altogether exhausted, and so he took to encouraging and cajoling the Emperor as well as threatening him. In this development lies the heart of the "moderation" that was characteristic of Herzen's publicism in the late 1850s and that was to be so bitterly attacked by younger radicals, once they had become disillusioned with the "Tsar Liberator." And as Herzen grew older and in his way "successful," his enthusiasm for revolution diminished.

Finally, a few words should be said about a rather confusing term that any investigator of the 1860s will be bound to encounter: "nihilism." Some historians have used the term to describe



the radicalism of the 1860s as a whole,<sup>49</sup> contrasting it thus with the Populism of the following decade. This usage is misleading because it unduly emphasizes the separateness of the two periods and does not reveal the intellectual (and even psychological) continuity between them. Sometimes the term is used to designate style—what would certainly be referred to today as a “radical life-style”—or a set of radical attitudes, elitist and scientific, prominent in the 1860s and less so afterward.

Most historians have found the purest expression of nihilism in the journalism of Dmitry Pisarev and some of his collaborators on the *Russian Word* (*Russkoe slovo*). Pisarev drowned at the age of twenty-eight, but he packed an astonishing amount of activity into so short a life. His journalistic career began in 1859, when he went to work for the first serious and political women's magazine in Russia, *Daybreak* (*Razsvet*). Over the next nine years, as editor of the *Russian Word* and (after serving a four-year prison sentence) as a free-lance writer, he achieved a political-journalistic prominence second only to that of Chernyshevsky.

One of the most notable aspects of what was called nihilism was its elitism, which obviously conflicted with the egalitarian tendencies of the Populist vision of Herzen and his successors. Nihilist attitudes always involved a strong belief in the unfettering of the individual, a *personal* revolt against societal standards that were regarded as backward and oppressive. These attitudes might coexist (a bit uneasily) with various forms of belief in the peasantry; often, especially in the mid-1860s, they did not.<sup>50</sup>

Mainstream Populism always implied (and sometimes stated in no uncertain terms) that “the West” had a good deal to learn from Russia, especially from Russia's peasant institutions. Pisarev and his colleagues believed no such thing, nor did they have any faith in the creative capacity of the peasant masses. They wanted to liberate the inhabitants of the Russian village in a variety of ways, but they believed that the first task was to bring into existence an elite of “critically thinking individuals” who would take the lead in transforming Russia. They regarded themselves as supreme realists; they were contemptuous of *anything* that smacked of art or culture for its own sake. In their hands, Pushkin



became, for a brief time, a negative figure: a sort of high cultural grandee who had to be brought low, much as a German radical might turn on Goethe. To oppose the exaltation of "art," which diverted people from the real tasks at hand, they made a cult of the exact sciences. Believing that their own emancipation and development were the prerequisites for a new Russia, they cultivated an aura of bitter militancy, ironic superiority, and general extremism: a kind of materialist Byronism. Their ethics were programmatically utilitarian.

In a general way it is clear why this sort of nihilism was so prevalent in the 1860s—flowering, it should be noted, *after* the euphoria of the Emancipation had waned. A self-conscious, zealously fostered elitism was an understandable response to the isolation of Russian radicalism, to the feeling that those who wanted to change things had only themselves to depend on. In some ways, nihilist attitudes were the intellectual counterparts of the Jacobinism and putschism that were also characteristic of the period and that we will discuss later. Certain nihilist attitudes were also very important in helping to demarcate the identity of the younger radicals from that of the earlier generation, from old fossils like Herzen, whose essential being had been formed by the bad old world that had to be destroyed. But in another way, people like Pisarev were the direct descendants of the Westerners of the 1840s. Although they denigrated art and believed in science, they inherited from the 1840s a faith in enlightenment and a belief in the developed individual. By contrast, they ridiculed the Slavophile-Populist belief that the Russia of the future depended on peasant values or institutions.

Nihilist *style* was what contemporaries noticed most often, however; in the memoir literature of the 1860s (particularly the recollections of moderates and conservatives), one finds the word generally used not to refer to Pisarev's radical elitism but to denote shocking and extreme behavior in general. Emancipated women, to take a case in point, were frequently referred to as *nigilistki* (female nihilists). Outside of radical circles the term had an application as broad as "Bolshie" in England after World War I or "Commie" in the America of the 1950s.



Ambiguity was present in the use of the term from its inception. Although it had been infrequently employed by a variety of writers in the early nineteenth century, it was introduced into the political arena by Ivan Turgenev in *Fathers and Children*, with reference to the hero Bazarov, who is, in his power, complexity of motivation, and final mystery, one of the great literary portrayals of a European radical. Much of the response from the Russian Left of the early 1860s to both the man and the term was negative, but Pisarev took it upon himself to champion and identify himself with both. The term was in a descriptive sense not accurate; Bazarov did not believe in "nothing," although he claimed to acknowledge no authorities. Indeed, he professed a passionate belief in the power of people like himself and in the possibilities of science. But the notion that radicals believed in nothing was an enticing one for conservatives; "nihilist" sounded enigmatic, sinister, but at the same time rather fascinating. And so the term became increasingly vague and meaningless.

Still, we must not overlook the more precise meaning of nihilism in the 1860s, as exemplified by Pisarev. Although in a theoretical sense it conflicted with certain aspects of Populism, it did not do so absolutely. After all, from the Slavophiles to Lenin, the vanguard role of *some* educated group ("the middle gentry," "the intelligentsia," "critically thinking individuals," the Party) was almost always recognized as central to social transformation. The nihilists emphasized that role more powerfully and explicitly than did other 1860s radicals.

The conflicts and arguments within the radical camp over nihilist elitism were continued in the 1870s—and on into the twentieth century. Was there some crucial advantage to "backwardness" or not? How large a role in the revolution should be played by a revolutionary elite? Repeated disappointments with "the people" were to magnify that role, with far-reaching results for Russia.

In thinking generally about the central myths of Populism, one must be careful not to overlook the variety and complexity of the views of individual Populist radicals, as well as evolution within



Populism, taken broadly. The Slavophile tone and feeling that was at moments so evident in Herzen's writings (and in those of other radicals of the 1860s and 1870s) gradually weakened and became more diffuse. Chernyshevsky was temperamentally a Westerner to whom Russian nationalism was largely alien and Herzen's aristocratism was anathema. Chernyshevsky's interest in the commune was a good deal more practical than Herzen's, and he studied it more thoroughly. Moreover, Chernyshevsky lacked that strong hostility to the modern state that was common to the first generation of Slavophiles, to Herzen, and to the mainstream of Populist radicalism. He was concerned, in fact, with the problem of how a (revolutionary) state should nurture and develop collectivist economic institutions, communes and cooperatives. And Chernyshevsky's ethics, like those of Pisarev, were egoistic and utilitarian.

If we concede, then, the existence of recurrent elitist impulses and formulations that both blended and conflicted with Herzen's legacy, and we further note that the most influential radical of the decade was by no means a straightforward continuer of Herzen's key ideas, how can we justify treating them at such length? How can we justify the commanding position given Herzen in these pages: that of the founder of a movement with sufficient unity and coherence to deserve the name?

These difficulties have been highlighted by the recent publication of a considered monograph asserting a quite different framework for considering Russian Populism. In *The Controversy Over Capitalism*, Andrzej Walicki, a distinguished Polish scholar, relegates Herzen and even Chernyshevsky to the role of forerunners. He views "classical Populism" as a phenomenon of the 1870s, which took shape primarily in opposition to Marxism; expressing the "standpoint of the small producers," it was above all an attempt to arrive at a noncapitalist model of economic development—revolutionary in some variants.

It is certainly true that in the 1870s a major preoccupation of Populist radicals became forestalling the horrors of bourgeois industrialization, in making the revolution *before* a rapacious and exploitative bourgeoisie on the European model could de-



velop in Russia. Walicki is to this extent correct in sharply separating the two periods.

One's justification for treating the Slavophile inheritance, radicalized by Herzen and Chernyshevsky, as crucially shaping must lie in the mythic inheritance that Populism received from the earlier period: the focus on the peasant and his institutions; the view of the Russian state as oppressive and "non-Russian," imposed from outside onto the organic life of the people (an extremely non-Marxist belief!); the social messianism, the belief that Russia had a unique destiny, a special entrée into the modern world that would avoid the agonies of class conflict through which Europe had been passing since the French Revolution. The broadest formulations of Populism and a great deal of its feeling and tone predate the arrival of Marxism in Russia, however Pëtr Lavrov, Nikolai Mikhailovsky, and other Populist theorists of the 1870s may have responded to the power of the Marxist view of history.

Although the presence of Marxist formulations in the writings of individual Populists is apparent, it was not until the 1880s (and in an acute form in the 1890s) that a unitary kind of Marxism became a competitor for the loyalties of Russian radicals. Even at this point, however, the Populist vision was not vanquished; in a somewhat updated form, it became the doctrinal base for the Socialist Revolutionary Party and survived into the 1920s.

When one looks at the history of Marxism in Russia, one naturally finds a variety of currents, interpretations, "applications" of Marxist doctrine to Russian reality. Yet we are justified, at times, in speaking inclusively of Russian Marxism. Of course Herzen's writings never had the doctrinal authority that surrounded those of Marx, nor would anyone claim for Herzen the depth, power, and scope of Marx. And yet the radical vision that Herzen did so much to formulate had the same kind of power over the minds of thinking Russians for a time that the writings of Marx enjoyed in a later period, even if no one spoke of "Herzenism." If anything, Populism had a more pervasive influence on educated Russians than Marxism ever did, although it is harder to pinpoint. Lacking the scientific and universalist claims of Marxism, Popu-



lism could neither gain non-Russian adherents nor come up with an authoritative set of texts from which its supporters could "prove" their claims. In the heyday of Russian Marxism, a variety of other intellectual movements competed with it—a revived Populism, neo-Kantianism, and the Orthodox revival of the early twentieth century, to mention only a few. From the late 1850s well into the 1870s, Populist ideas were subjected to no sustained challenge of an intellectual kind.<sup>51</sup> And although the number of educated Russians who accepted the totality of Herzen's views was small, almost no "thinking" person escaped the influence of the Populist gestalt.